

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please delete the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 1, in its entirety.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 1, immediately after the title "DEPTH AND PUNCTURE CONTROL FOR BLOOD VESSEL HEMOSTASIS SYSTEM" with the following rewritten paragraph:

**--CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is ~~an~~ a continuation-in-part and claims priority to U.S. patent application serial no. 09/613,439, entitled "System and Method for Facilitating Hemostasis of Blood Vessel Punctures with Absorbable Sponge" by ~~inventor~~ inventors Andrew H. Cragg, Rodney Brenneman, and Mark Ashby, filed on July 11, 2000, which is a divisional of U.S. patent application no. 09/071,284 filed May 1, 1998, by inventors Andrew H. Cragg, Rodney Brenneman, and Mark Ashby, now ~~issues~~ issued as U.S. patent 6,162,192. This application further claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/156,007, filed September 23, 1999.--